

**Board of Conservation and Recreation
Tuesday, September 20, 2005
Colonial Courthouse
Gloucester, Virginia**

Board of Conservation and Recreation Members Present

Alan D. Albert, Chair
Linda Crandell
Stephen Murray

Sheryl D. Swinson, Vice Chair
Joy A. Cooley
E. Carter Nettles, Jr.

Gerald Connolly, by phone

Board of Conservation and Recreation Members Not Present

David G. Brickley
Richard Formato
Susan Swecker

J. Benjy Burnett
Gwen Mason

Staff Present

Joseph H. Maroon, Director
David C. Dowling
John R. Davy
Thomas Smith
Michael R. Fletcher

Others Present

Bill Whitley, Gloucester County Administrator
Georgette Hurley, Assistant Gloucester County Administrator

Call to Order

Mr. Albert called the meeting to order. There was not a quorum present. Mr. Connolly joined by telephone.

Approval of Minutes from June 2, 2005

Minutes deferred for action until the next meeting.

Director's Report

Mr. Maroon gave the Director's Report. He noted that it was a pleasure to be in Gloucester County and said that he hoped members would be able to attend the afternoon event announcing a new State Park on the York River.

Mr. Maroon recognized Mr. Bill Whitley, Gloucester County Administrator. Mr. Whitley noted that County was formed in 1751. The Courthouse was built in 1766 and is one of the oldest courthouses in Virginia still in continuous use.

Mr. Albert thanked Mr. Whitley for hosting the meeting and for all the County had done to make the Middle Peninsula park possible.

Mr. Maroon noted that this was the third of three DCR Board meetings in four days. He noted that the state as well as DCR has been involved in relief efforts from Hurricane Katrina. DCR had offered a number of state park cabins for housing, but at this point those were not needed. Law enforcement officers and flood plain managers are on standby to assist in the Gulf Region.

Governor Warner has placed a large priority on having this administration assist in whatever way possible.

The extension of the lease for Oconeechee State Park is in the process of being finalized. The extension will add an additional 38 years for a total lease of 50 years.

Staff has met with several legislative leaders to review existing park facilities. Members of the Appropriations Committee staff had asked questions concerning costs for cabin construction. John Davy and Warren Wahl participated in these meetings.

DCR has been working with Delegate Steve Landes regarding Grand Caverns in Augusta County.

Mr. Maroon said that the afternoon ceremony on the York River was for the purposes of announcing the acquisition of land by the Trust for Public Lands. Approximately 450 acres on the York River will be turned over by the Trust for Public Land to DCR for the development of a state park.

Delegate Harvey Morgan and his wife Mary Helen have been very active in the acquisition. Mrs. Morgan is Chair of the Middle Peninsula Land Trust.

Mr. Maroon represented Governor Warner at the opening of the first three miles of trails of what will become the Tobacco Heritage Trail. Mr. Brickley, Mr. Nettles and Mr. Burnett also attended the event.

Mr. Maroon said the Captain John Smith trail is progressing nicely. A new major motion picture entitled "New World" is scheduled for release and will generate interest in the 2007 commemoration.

Secretary Murphy and Mr. Maroon accepted the first ever Trails and Greenways award from Eastman Kodak Company on behalf of the Governor. The award was presented at the National Geographic Society's offices in Washington, DC.

Status of New State Parks

Mr. Davy gave a presentation regarding the development of new State Parks.

Natural Chimneys/Grand Caverns

DCR has been approached by the Upper Valley Regional Park Authority about acquiring both Natural Chimneys and Grand Caverns. Both are in poor shape. After considerable analysis, DCR believes that Grand Caverns would be the better site for potential park development.

The Caverns are among the top 10 caves in the world for the features they have and rank second in visits for publicly owned caverns.

Senator Emmitt Hanger and Delegate Steve Landes represent the area.

High Bridge Rail Trail Corridor

The High Bridge Rail Trail Corridor runs from Burkeville to Pamplin, largely along the banks of the Appomattox River. The abandonment of this line is completed. The process of transferring the land from Norfolk Southern to DCR is underway.

The Town of Farmville has raised a concern about approximately 70 acres of trail that go through the Town. They would prefer local management to this section of the trail.

Mr. Davy said this raised the following concerns:

- 1) DCR would prefer to manage any rail trail corridor to be managed as one entity for consistency.
- 2) This would leave a three mile section of the trail that would not be included in the park master plan.

Mr. Connolly asked Mr. Maroon to elaborate on the Town's concern.

Mr. Maroon said that the Town believes they can open the three mile section sooner.

Mr. Connolly asked if there was a way that the state could retain ownership of the trail, that would allow the Town to manage their section.

Mr. Maroon said a number of different options were being considered.

Seven Bends

Dr. Jim Myers donated about 700 acres to the Commonwealth along the Shenandoah River. With the addition of land donated by the Town of Woodstock, added to the Department's land purchased with Bond proceeds and Mr. Myers' donation park will consist of nearly 1100 acres.

There are access issues to the property. Presently the land can only be access via two low water bridges. DCR will have to work with VDOT to get bridge access into the park in the future.

The property will be dedicated in the Town of Woodstock at 1:00 p.m. on October 24. Governor Warner is expected to attend the event.

Widewater

The Widewater property is located in Stafford County and is owned by Dominion Resources. The acquisition of the land is tied up with a number of legal issues. The property consists of 1100 acres on the Potomac River and Aquia Creek.

Beaumont on James River

The acquisition of the Beaumont property is complete. The final meeting of the Master Plan committee was scheduled for the evening of September 20. This land was carved out of the Beaumont Correctional Facility in Powhatan.

There are two issues of concern.

- 1) There is a concern with the buffer along the boundary of the park.
- 2) Concern has been expressed about the agricultural fields currently in use by the Department of Corrections. The Master Plan has addressed the issue of agricultural use on this property.

Mr. Maroon noted that Ms. Swecker and Mr. Murray had been involved in the Master Planning process.

Gloucester – Middle Peninsula Site

The approximate 450 acres of this site are located on the York River. Gloucester County was particularly happy to be able to identify this site.

Mr. Maroon expressed appreciation to Mr. Davy and Mr. Elton for their work on the acquisition of these six new park properties.

Southside Rails to Trails Initiative and Workshop

Mr. Davy gave an update regarding the Southside Virginia Rail to Trail opportunities. DCR is looking at converting to a trail 36 miles of railbed currently owned by the railroad and an additional five miles in private ownership. He said that DCR hopes to complete this acquisition by fall.

The West Piedmont Trails Symposium will be held on October 28, 2005 in Danville. The symposium will feature keynote speaker David Crockett, former president of Chattanooga's City Council. He is considered by many to be the primary architect of Chattanooga's renaissance.

Natural Heritage Update

Mr. Smith gave the following Natural Heritage Update.

Virginia's Natural Heritage Program

- Mission: Identify, protect & conserve Virginia's biological diversity
- 40 full time staff (11 Inventory, 7 data management, 3 Admin, 3 Karst, 3 Protection, 13 Natural Area Mgmt); 14 hourly staff
- \$1.8 million general fund budget +
- \$800,000 grants and contract income
- Budget and staffing stable for now
- Manage 41 State Natural Area Preserves, 41,000 acres and growing

200+ field surveys and 150+ discoveries such as:

- Discovered three new populations of the federally listed small-whorled pogonia
- Three year \$500,000 study of globally rare rock outcrop communities in Shenandoah National Park

Virginia Invasive Species Council

- Council created by the General Assembly in 2003
- Council and Stakeholder Advisory Committee staffed by DCR-Natural Heritage
- No money, no staff
- Currently in final stages of writing statewide management plan

- Early detection, rapid response
- Research for control of widespread species
- Developing a Council website for invasive species information clearinghouse
- Act sunsets in 2006 without action

Recent Natural Area Preserve Acquisitions

New NAPs

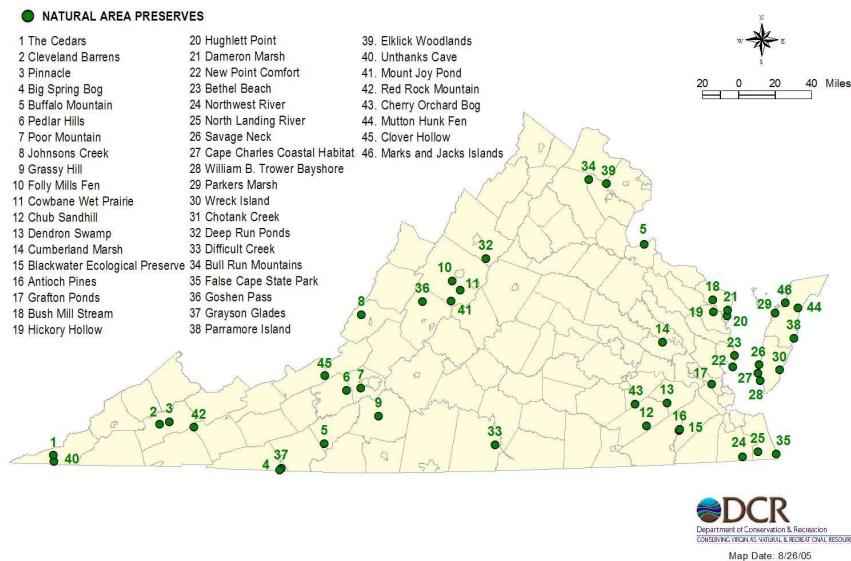
Cherry Orchard Bog	353 acres
Clover Hollow	25 acres
Mt Joy Pond	274 acres
Mutton Hunk Fen	411 acres
Marks & Jacks Islands	2,000 acres

NAP Additions

Antioch Pines	483 acres
Chub Sandhill	46 acres
Pinnacle	75 acres
The Cedars	100 acres

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

46 State Natural Area Preserves ~ 40,814 Acres



Proposed change to 4-PM Burn Ban

- February 15 to April 30 no open burning before 4pm
- Current exemption for approved burns between Feb 15 and March 1 for invasive species control, wildlife mgmt, natural heritage resources
- Requesting exemption for entire period Feb 15 to April 30.
- WHY
 - Increasingly important tool, 20+ NAPs

- Growing season burns control woody plants and increase herbaceous flowering and seed production
- Current law restricts growing season burns to May & early June (rain, hot days, compacted fuels)
- Under current law just not enough days
- Fall/winter not a substitute (no woody control, consume seeds, increase non-point source pollution)

Natural Area Preserve Additional Operations Needs Summary –2004

- 6 New FTE + basic operational expenses - \$486,000
 - 2 Operations Stewards
 - 1 Regional/Ecological Steward
 - 2 Statewide Stewardship Biologists
 - 1 Statewide Conservation Planner
 - 6 Wage Staff
 - NOT FUNDED IN FY 2006

Natural Area Preserve Nonpersonnel Costs - \$305,000

- Boundaries, gates, parking areas, roads, trails, signs, law enforcement, invasive species, fire management, habitat restoration, wildlife management FUNDED IN FY 2006

Virginia Outdoors Plan Update

Mr. Davy gave the following overview on the 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan.

Virginia Outdoors Plan

Purpose: The *Virginia Outdoors Plan* is the Commonwealth's official conservation, outdoor recreation and open space plan. The plan is intended to serve as a guide to all levels of government and the private sector in meeting the state's conservation, outdoor recreation and open space needs. Virginia has produced a *Virginia Outdoors Plan* approximately every five years since 1966. This is the eighth *Virginia Outdoors Plan* produced in accordance with §10.1-200 of the *Code of Virginia*.

The plan also serves as a guidance document for land protection through actions of the *Virginia Land Conservation Foundation*. Identification of important conservation lands in each planning district (region) is one of the tools used by foundation trustees in ranking and selecting projects for funding. The *Virginia Outdoors Plan* is specifically cited in §10.1-1021.

The plan meets the requirement for Virginia's participation in the federal *Land and Water Conservation Fund* (L&WCF) program and guides the way in which grant funds for state and local projects are approved.

Process for Development of the 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan

- Developed new outdoor recreation resource inventory
- Conducting 2005 *Virginia Outdoors Survey*
- Establishing advisory committee
- Conducting more than 40 public meetings
- Meet with all state and federal resource managers
- Working with each planning district (PDC) in developing recommendations
- Maintaining draft of the 2007 *Virginia Outdoors Plan* (VOP) on the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) website

2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan - Initial Issues

- Livable/walkable communities
- Water quality
- Eco-tourism
- Thematic trail opportunities; e.g., birding, Civil War history, African-American heritage
- Green infrastructure
- Open space, growth management issues and trends
- Integrated systems
- Health/fitness relationship to outdoor recreation resources
- Identify greenway/blueway/trail opportunities
- Funding for maintenance, capital improvements and operations/management

2005 Virginia Outdoors Survey Ranking of Recreational Activities

The 2005 Virginia Outdoors Survey is currently being conducted. The results will be available upon completion of the survey

2005 Virginia Outdoors Survey Data

*Please indicate which of the following Outdoor Recreational Opportunities, if any, you feel are **MOST NEEDED** in Virginia.*

- Public access to state waters for boating, fishing, swimming, and beach use
- Playing fields for outdoor sports such as softball, baseball, football, and soccer
- Outdoor playing courts for tennis and basketball
- Trails for bicycling
- Trails for hiking and walking
- Trails for horseback riding
- Access to historic areas
- Access to natural areas

- Other (Please Specify)

2005 Virginia Outdoors Survey Data

When you recreate outdoors, do you prefer developed parks with recreational facilities such as ball fields, campgrounds, picnic areas, and multi-use trails; or do you prefer natural areas without developed recreational facilities other than a parking area and foot trails? (Circle one answer)

- 1.DEVELOPED PARKS
- 2.NATURAL AREAS
- 3.NO PREFERENCE

Although privately owned campgrounds may be available in the vicinity, should public campgrounds be developed in Virginia's state parks? (Circle one answer)

- 1.No
- 2.Yes
- 3.Don't Know

Answer under both **A** and **B**, for each of the amenities listed below:

A. Circle HOW IMPORTANT each of the following amenities are to you and your family members, when camping at a drive-in campground?

B. Circle YES for each of the seven amenities you think **SHOULD BE PROVIDED** at public campgrounds in Virginia such as state parks.

AMENITIES	<u>A</u>			<u>B</u>	
	How Important (circle)			Should be Provided	
	NOT IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	YES	NO
1. SEWER HOOKUPS	NI	I	VI	Y	N
2. ELECTRIC/WATER HOOKUPS	NI	I	VI	Y	N
3. FLUSH TOILETS	NI	I	VI	Y	N
4. SHOWERS	NI	I	VI	Y	N
5. PAVED ROADS	NI	I	VI	Y	N
6. GROCERY STORE	NI	I	VI	Y	N
7. RESTAURANT	NI	I	VI	Y	N
8. OTHER (please specify)	NI	I	VI	Y	N

When you go camping, do you prefer to camp in a publicly owned campground (such as in a state or national park or forest), in a privately owned campground, or in both public and privately owned campgrounds? (Circle One Answer)

1. PUBLICLY OWNED CAMPGROUNDS
2. PRIVATELY OWNED CAMPGROUNDS
3. BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATELY OWNED

Did you, or any member of your household, visit a Virginia STATE PARK in the past 12 months? (Circle One)

1. NO
2. YES
3. DON'T KNOW

If YES, how many times did you and members of your household visit Virginia STATE PARKS in the last 12 months? _____ Times

Please list the names of all Virginia STATE PARKS that you and members of your household visited in the last 12 months.

Which of the following do you and members of our household consider to be the top THREE reasons for having the Virginia system of state parks?

(Circle top Three Reasons)

1. Conserving natural resources.
2. Providing people places to explore & enjoy nature and their cultural heritage.
3. Providing large natural areas which offer recreation opportunities.
4. Learning about nature, history, and the outdoors.
5. Providing places for walking, running, and other activities that contribute to a healthy lifestyle.
6. Providing special places for quiet contemplation.
7. Attracting visitors to rural areas and helping the local economy.
8. Other (Specify:) _____

Which, if any, of the following reasons that prevented you or members of your household from using Virginia State Parks in the past year? (Circle All that Apply)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Lack of information | 5. Too expensive |
| 2. Too crowded | 6. Not interested in state parks |
| 3. Lack of desired activities | 7. Public Safety/security concerns |
| 4. Too far away from home/household | 8. Other: _____ |

What style of lodging would you prefer in state parks? (circle one)

1. Rustic one room cabin
2. One bedroom cabin

3. 2-3 bedroom cabin _____ Check if Have No Preference.
 4. 6 bedroom family lodge
 5. Hotel style room
 6. Other _____

How **IMPORTANT** is it that Virginia State Parks provide each of the following?
 (Circle one Answer for Each)

	NOT IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT
1. CABINS	NI	I	VI
2. CAMPING FACILITIES	NI	I	VI
3. BOATING WATER ACCESS	NI	I	VI
4. VISITOR CENTERS	NI	I	VI
5. NATURE PROGRAMS	NI	I	VI
6. CULTURAL/HISTORIC PROGRAMS	NI	I	VI
7. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS	NI	I	VI
8. FOOD SERVICE	NI	I	VI
9. BOAT/CANOE/KAYAK / RENTALS	NI	I	VI
10. GIFTS, SOUVENIRS, CAMP STORE	NI	I	VI
11. SWIMMING	NI	I	VI
12. PLAYGROUNDS	NI	I	VI
13. HIKING TRAILS	NI	I	VI
14. BICYCLE TRAILS	NI	I	VI
15. EQUESTRIAN TRAILS	NI	I	VI
16. MULTIPLE USE TRAILS	NI	I	VI
17. HUNTING	NI	I	VI
18. FISHING	NI	I	VI
19. HOTEL-STYLE ACCOMMODATION	NI	I	VI
20. GOLF COURSES	NI	I	VI
21. Other (Specify)	NI	I	VI

Would you feel comfortable swimming at a state park lakefront or river swimming area if lifeguards were **NOT** on duty? (Circle)

1. YES 2. NO 3. DON'T KNOW

Should the state spend public funds to acquire land to prevent the loss of exceptional natural areas to development? (Circle)

1. NO
 2. YES
 3. DON'T KNOW

How important do you and members of your household feel it is to protect Virginia's natural and open space resources? (Circle)

1. NOT IMPORTANT
 2. IMPORTANT
 3. VERY IMPORTANT

4. DON'T KNOW

When spending public monies to protect Virginia's natural and open space resources from development, which protection strategy do you and members of your household feel is the best.

1. PURCHASE OF EASEMENTS THAT REDUCE DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS BUT LEAVE THE LAND IN PRIVATE OWNERSHIP WITH NO PUBLIC USE.
2. PURCHASE OF EASEMENTS THAT REDUCE DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS BUT LEAVE THE LAND IN PRIVATE OWNERSHIP WITH SOME PUBLIC USE ALLOWED.
3. OUTRIGHT PURCHASE FROM WILLING SELLERS OF THE PROPERTY, AND THEN MANAGEMENT AS NATURAL AREA OR PARK FOR PUBLIC USE.

State Parks Project Fund

Mr. Fletcher reviewed the Project Status Report and the new Project Requests. As there was no quorum present no action was taken. Mr. Maroon noted that the Board role in these actions is advisory.

Staff will move forward with the recommendations as presented.

Other Business

Mr. Maroon said that Mr. Smith and his staff do incredible work with limited resources. The \$20 million received under the bond projects will essentially double the amount invested in Natural Heritage since the beginning of the program.

Mr. Davy noted that Jerry Cassidy, long time DCR employee had announced his retirement.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Meeting Schedule

The next meeting will be either December 16, 2005 or January 6, 2006.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan D. Albert
Chairman

Joseph H. Maroon
Executive Secretary